

SCSBA to lead search for new superintendent

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Content

Lancaster County School District will use the S.C. School Board Association's superintendent search team to facilitate the replacement of Dr. Jonathan Phipps.

Phipps announced March 21 that he will retire in June 2024, two years before his contract ends.

Scott Price, executive director of the S.C. School Board Association (SCSBA), presented the search process his organization would facilitate at the March 29 district planning meeting.

The board unanimously approved using SCSBA's services at the April 18 board meeting. Board member Margaret Gamble was absent for the vote.

Price said the base fee for the SCSBA search process is \$15,000, and there can be an additional \$3,000-\$5,000 in administrative costs, to cover expenses such as travel. The total cost will not exceed \$20,000.

"It's really a tried-and-true process that we use," he said. "But I want to stress to you now and going forward, that if we move forward together, this is your search. We will tailor this to fit your needs and your requirements."

The entire process will take about three to six months, and is confidential until the three finalists have been named.

"Superintendent searches and selecting a new superintendent is probably one of the most important things you'll do as a board," Price said. "It's really important to find that right fit, not only for the board, but for the community, the schools, the students and parents."

The SCSBA has been conducting superintendent searches for over 20 years. The previous school board chose Phipps, who was superintendent of Abbeville County School District, through an independent consultant.

Price said he recommends the board set up community input sessions at various local locations across the district, so board members can hear feedback and input from everyone.

“That’s a typical approach, to get as much community input as you can and use that to guide you and who you’re looking for, for your next candidate,” Price said. “And then at the end of the day, you make the decision.”

Lydia Quinn, the district’s chief operations officer, suggested that the board also get feedback from school staffs.

“If I would encourage the board of anything, I would also ask that you do focus groups with teachers and with principals,” she said. “Being a teacher is more than just a job; it’s who they are. And this is the person (the new superintendent) that’s going to have a whole lot of impact on what they do on a daily basis.”

Phipps agreed.

“It is so incredibly important that you have your administrators to find out what’s important with them, because they need to feel more supported than they do now from the board,” he said. “There’s a mistrust and a lack of support they feel currently and I think that this is a time to heal that wound and not make it larger.”

The board did not say whether they will consider candidates nationwide or just in the Southeast.

“I think it’s great to cast a wide net,” said board member Courtney Green. “But because of the transparency and trust issues we have there, we’ve got to be real careful with that one, in particular, at least for the time being, because of the view of that from our citizens, because of things that were said and done during COVID.”

Board member Tyrom Faulkner said that a search of this magnitude needs to have every member on the same page with the same information, so that they can make the right decision.

“I just want to make sure that during this search...that information just don’t go to the board chair and the vice chair and sit there, and not be disseminated to the whole entire board,” he said.

The SCSBA search committee will include Price, his executive assistant and superintendent search coordinator Judy LeGrand and Dr. Darrell Johnson, retired superintendent from Greenwood 50.

The process will start by May 15, which was also unanimously approved by the board at the April 18 meeting. Board members Faulkner, Casey Cato and Courtney Green will be on the superintendent search committee, facilitated and overseen by board Chair Brad Small.

Child images

LANNWS-04-26-23 SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH Scott Price

